

# Hearts

**OBJECTIVE OF HEARTS:** The objective of this game is to have the lowest score. When a player hits the pre-determined score, the player with the lowest score wins the game.

**NUMBER OF PLAYERS:** 3 to 7

**NUMBER OF CARDS:** Standard 52-card pack

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## OVERVIEW OF HEARTS RULES

Hearts was first found to be played in America in the 1880s, but was born from a game played in the 1600s in Spain! You can play Hearts with 3 to 7 players. But it is most commonly played with four players. In this article, we will explain the basic Hearts rules and lay out several variations for you to try! Let's get straight into it!

## SETUP

The first thing to do when setting up a game of Hearts is to choose a dealer at random. You will use a standard deck of 52 cards. However,, in a 3-player game, remove the 2 of clubs. In a 5-player game, remove the two of clubs and diamonds. The dealer will shuffle the deck, and another player will cut the deck.

There is also a [2-Player Hearts](#) version, that follows slightly different rules.

## HOW TO DEAL IN HEARTS

The dealer deals clockwise and face down. In a four-player game, all players receive 13 cards (pictured above). In a five-person game, all players receive ten cards; in a three-person game, The dealer deals players 17 cards.

## HOW TO PLAY HEARTS

Once the dealer deals all cards and players have arranged their hands accordingly, the player with the two of clubs goes first. If the two of clubs has been removed, lead with the three of clubs.

All players must follow suit if capable. In hearts, there is no trump suit. The highest card played of the leading suit wins, and the winner gets to begin the next trick. Players who cannot follow suit can throw out any other card. This is a great opportunity to eliminate high cards and prevent winning unwanted suits. The only exception is that players cannot play either hearts or the queen of spades in the first trick. However, they can be thrown in any trick afterward, as long as the player has none of the leading suit.

Players can only lead with a heart once either a heart or the queen of Spades has been played. However, the queen of Spades can lead at any point in the game.

Players can determine how many points they are playing to, and the player with the lowest score at the end of the game wins!

## HOW TO SCORE

This is a trick-taking game like [Spades](#), but the goal is to win a minimal number of tricks, or better yet, the goal is NOT to win tricks that contain hearts or the queen of spades. At the end of each round, players add up the number of hearts they've won that round and the queen of spades to their score. Remember, the objective is to have the lowest score.

Hearts = 1pt/each

Queen of Spades = 13 points!

## SHOOTING THE MOON

To Shoot the Moon, you must win all the hearts and the Queen of Spades during the round. If you win all the needed cards, you will score 0 points instead of scoring points yourself. All other players score 26 points.

## PENALTIES

If a player does not follow suit, even if able to, they have until the end of the trick to fix it. If it is not fixed but noticed by any player before you finish scoring, the player who misplayed scores for all the hearts from that round.

# HEARTS STRATEGIES

There are many good strategies and playstyles you can take on in Hearts. They will even help you in other games such as [Complex Hearts](#) or even [Bridge](#)! Below we explore some of the basic strategies to improve your game.

## KEEP WATCH

Always pay attention to what cards players are using in tricks. Knowing what is still available for play will increase your ability to play around your opponents.

## HIGH CARD TRICKS

If it becomes apparent that you will win a trick, play your highest card of the suit to be less likely to be caught in the same situation again. Remember what you pass to the other player and what you got from that pass.

## NEVER LEAD ACE

Leading an ace to a trick almost guarantees you will win the trick. This is especially problematic if the Queen of Spades is still in play.

# COMMON HEARTS VARIATIONS

There are many variations you can use for the standard Heart rules. Below, we will cover some of the most commonly used variations.

- Instead of having the player with the 2 of Clubs starting each round, you can also choose to have the player to the left of the dealer start.
- Players cannot play point cards during the first trick.
- If hole cards, cards that the dealer does not deal during the dealing phase, remain, they can be given to the first player to win a trick.
- Players must pass three cards after each deal. Players pass left, then right, then across the table. Finally, for the fourth round, no cards are passed.
- Shooting the Moon allows players to subtract 26 points from their score instead of all other players earning 26 points.
- In each round, the dealer deals 12 cards to each player. The dealer deals four cards to a kitty. The player to win a trick first gets the kitty!

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